

About Our Journey

This summer five amputees will bicycle their way from coast-to-coast stopping at 20 HealthSouth hospitals. The riders will depart from HealthSouth Tustin Rehabilitation Hospital in California on June 2 and arrive at HealthSouth Treasure Coast Rehabilitation Hospital in Vero Beach, Florida, on July 26.

Amputees Across America ride bicycles in support of amputees by:

Traveling 3,500 miles, visiting 20 rehabilitation hospitals and amputee support groups

Increasing public awareness of amputees as active participants in high-intensity activities, such as bicycling

Providing hope and support for those who are overcoming physical challenges due to illness and injury

Maintaining a daily blog while en route

www.amputeesacrossamerica.com

The Riders

Dick Fate is a 61-year-old above-the-knee amputee from Albuquerque, N.M. In 1971, Fate graduated from the U.S. Military Academy and served as the Commander of a tank company in Germany. Following his service with the U.S. Army, Dick graduated from New Mexico State University with a master's degree in business administration and mechanical engineering.



After battling soft tissue sarcoma for 13 years, Fate lost his leg in 2007 and as a physical therapy patient at HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of Albuquerque, attended Amputees Across America events. He was impressed with the enthusiasm and excitement the event generated and decided to join the group for the 2010 event. Fate hopes that his participation in the ride will mirror his life dream to make a difference in the lives of others.

John Cool is a 43-year-old above-the-knee amputee from Allentown, Pa. Cool lost his right leg in a motorcycle accident in August of 2004. Along with the amputation, he also experienced a Brachial Plexus injury, affecting the nerves in his right arm. Cool spent seven years in the U.S. Navy as a maintenance technician traveling all over the United States, Canada and Europe, while stationed on three different aircraft carriers. He worked as a welder in the Cryogenic Industry for several years and also



welded for a mechanical contractor. John has two children, Zack, 18, and Josh, 13, and enjoys spending time with family and friends and doing anything outdoors, especially biking.

Abel Cruz is a 58-year-old left leg above-the-knee amputee from Albuquerque, N.M. After retirement from the U.S. Navy at the rank of Chief Petty Officer in 2001, Cruz worked as a mortgage loan officer. In August of 2005, Cruz was traveling by motorcycle to visit U.S. Navy friends when a wheel from a semi-truck in tow traveling in the opposite direction came loose and struck him. His injuries from this accident included an above-the-knee amputation complicated with left shoulder, left femoral neck and pelvic fractures.



As a patient at HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospital of Albuquerque, Cruz was pedaling a stationary bike before he could even walk. During his hospital stay, Cruz joined the Amputees Across America group for the 2006 ride-in ceremony held at HealthSouth Albuquerque. The following year, he was recruited to join the group and has participated every year since. This year, Cruz will lead the Amputees Across America group from California to Louisiana.

Cruz is an inspiration to many people every day and when asked if he could change the outcome of his incident if possible, he replies, "My amputation has made me who I am today. It has shown me that I can survive, it has shown me my strengths and that I can live life to the fullest."

Joe Sapere, a 69-year-old retired Air Force Colonel, is the oldest rider in the group. Sapere lost his left leg below the knee due to a mid-air collision with another sky diver in February 2000. Born in Yonkers, N.Y., he attended Kenyon College in Gambier, Ohio and entered the United States Air Force in 1963. In 1989, he retired from the Air Force and began a second career as an elementary school teacher.



Since his injury and rehabilitation, Sapere, an avid cyclist, spends every day riding, weather permitting, and has returned to the sport of skydiving. Since his amputation, Sapere received an Ertl bone bridge that enables him to sustain high forces on his residual limb while engaging in high impact activities such as skydiving and endurance cycling. His goal in life is to demonstrate to other amputees that life gets better despite amputation.

In 2002, Sapere founded Amputees Across America. Each year, he is joined by other amputees to make a coast-to-coast bicycle trip visiting amputee and other rehabilitation patients at HealthSouth Rehabilitation Hospitals. This year, he will lead the group from Louisiana to Florida.

Doc Milligan, a Dayton, Ohio native, is a 63-year-old amputee. In high school he played football and baseball and competed in track and wrestling. He entered active service with the U.S. Navy in November of 1965 and served until December of 1969, when he was discharged due to a bone disease in his legs. Until the age of 45, Milligan worked as a plumber, participated in AAU wrestling and raced BMX bikes with his son, Sean. At the age of 60, after years of severe pain, he lost his left leg below the knee.



He enjoys helping others set goals and taking life one step at a time. In addition, he is a self-taught sand artist of Western and North American art. He thinks of himself as an ordinary guy doing ordinary things. This is the second year Milligan has participated in the Amputees Across America tour.